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...RY'S · REWARD

BY · EVELYN · SNEAD
BARNETT · · · · · · ·

COSY CORNER SERIES

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JERRY'S REWARD

"THEY NEVER SAW THE OLD FELLOW WITHOUT SHOUTING." (*See page 21*)

Cosy Corner Series

JERRY'S REWARD

By

Evelyn Snead Barnett

Illustrated by

Etheldred B. Barry

Boston

L. C. Page & Company

1903

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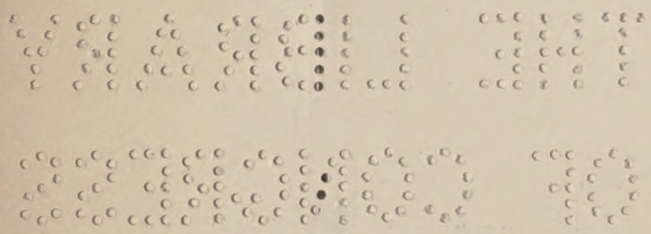

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Interrupted Game	11
II.	The Shadow	16
III.	Paddy and Peggy	22
IV.	Hard Times	28
V.	Peggy Overhears a Startling Conversation	35
VI.	The Police are Summoned	41
VII.	Where Was Peggy?	49
VIII.	Luck in Disguise	58
IX.	Paddy Makes the Effort of His Life	66

ILLVSTRATIONS

PAGE

"THEY NEVER SAW THE OLD FELLOW WITHOUT SHOUTING *(See page 21)* . . *Frontispiece*

"THEY STOOD IN A LONG ROW" . . . 13

"HE TURNED AROUND SUDDENLY" . . . 19

"'THE TOP OF THE MORNIN' TO YE'" . . 24

"ALL THE CHILDREN EXCEPT THE BABIES STARTED FOR SCHOOL" 29

"ALTHOUGH SHE WAS WARMLY CLAD, THE RUSH OF COLD AIR MADE HER SHIVER" . . 39

"'WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING HERE ALONE?'" 44

"A STURDY LEG EMERGING FROM HIS FRONT WINDOW" 53

"AROUND HIS TANNED AND WRINKLED NECK WENT HER WHITE ARMS" 64

"AFTER THEM FOLLOWED THE NURSES, CARRYING THE BABIES" 73

JERRY'S REWARD

CHAPTER I.

THE INTERRUPTED GAME

JEFFERSON SQUARE was a short street in Gaminsville, occupying just one block. It took only two things on one side of it to fill up the space from corner to corner. One was the Convent of the Good Shepherd, built on a large lot surrounded by a high brick wall; the other, a common where all the people around dumped cinders, rags, tin cans — in fact, anything on earth they wished to throw away. On the other side were dwelling-houses, and these were filled with children—lots of them. There surely were never so many children on one square before!

There were the Earlys, the Rickersons, the Bakers, the Adamses, the Mortons, and the Longs — twenty-one in all.

There were really twenty-eight; but the parents of seven children, though they were not what you might call poor, were not well-born like the others, so nobody counted them any more than they included them in the games that the twenty-one played. This was sad for the seven little outcasts, but the others never thought about that.

The twenty-one had splendid times together. It was play, play, play for ever — dolls, pin fairs, circuses, and games. Every afternoon they gathered in the Mortons' front gate, because it was wider and had three stone steps leading down from it, where all the children could sit.

One evening, the latter part of August, the sun had dipped down behind the world, leaving red splashes over a green sky. On seeing it the children played fast and furiously, for they knew only too well that when the sky looked like that they might at any moment be called indoors, made to eat their suppers and go to bed.

The oldest child of the lot was Henry Clay Morton. He was one of those boys who try to have their way in everything, and generally succeed; so, on this particular evening when he got tired playing "Grammammy Gray" and proposed "Lost My Handkerchief," the

others consented without any fuss. The next thing to decide was who should be "ole man." They stood in a long row, and Henry Clay, pointing, began at the top and gave each child a word like this:

"Eeny, meany, miny, mo;
Cracky, feeny, finy fo;

Ommer neutcha, popper teucha;
Rick, bick, ban, do.

"Oner-ry, oer-ry, ickery Ann;
Phyllis and Phollis and Nicholas John;
Queevy quavy, English Navy,
Stinklum, stanklum, BUCK."

"Buck" was "ole man," and on this occasion happened to be Addison Gravison Rickerson, a little pudgy boy who was called "Addy Gravvy" for short. He took a handkerchief, and the children, joining hands, formed a big circle. Then skipping behind them he sang:

"Lost my hankshuff yesterday,
Found it to-day,
Filled it full 'er water,
En dashed it away."

He sang the words twice, and then he let the handkerchief fall behind little Nell Morton, but she was watching, so she grabbed it and chased Addy Gravvy, trying to catch him before he could get round the circle into her place. He ran so fast he would have beaten her had not Willie Baker stuck out his foot, tripping him up so that little Nell easily caught him.

Addy Gravvy protested: "That's no fair, I won't go in the middle." For whoever got caught had to go in the middle until the close of the game.

"She is so little," explained Willie, "that she never could have caught anybody."

"Then she oughtn't to play," said Addy Gravvy.

At this the children all began talking at once, for Nell was a favourite, and matters were looking serious, when suddenly a shadow crossed the bar of light made by the Mortons' open front door.

"Paddy!" "Paddy!" cried a dozen frightened ones, and the little group took to their heels.

In two minutes the street was as silent as midnight, the only person left being a little old man whose back was bent almost double. He turned and looked after the children and gave a long, deep sigh.

CHAPTER II.

THE SHADOW

Of course you wish to know all about the crooked man whose very shadow caused the children to stop their play and scamper to their homes.

You remember I told you that one side of Jefferson Square was occupied by the Convent of the Good Shepherd and the common? Well, this convent was a source of much interest and not a little awe to the children. They were always curious to know what was going on behind those high brick walls.

Nothing in the shape of a man, except the priests, was ever allowed inside the convent. You can judge, then, of the flutter it caused when one day at noon, as the children from their windows opposite were watching the penitents playing in the garden in their blue

dresses and white caps, they saw a little man go boldly in their midst and with a shovel begin turning up the soil.

To be sure he was old and ugly; his back was bent like a hoop, and his long nose almost touched his toes as he leaned over his shovel — but all the same he was a man.

"I wonder who on earth he can be!" said Fanny Morton, and the nurse who was peering over her head thoughtlessly replied:

"One of Satan's own imps."

They did not see the newcomer for a long time after, then one morning the word passed that he was there. This time the big iron gates at the side were open, and he was wheeling barrows of coal into the convent cellar.

The next meeting was on the common where he was raking over old rubbish and abstracting rags and bits of iron. The children were about to speak to him when something in his brown and wrinkled face recalled the nurse-girl's remark about "Satan's imps," so they were afraid and ran home.

I do not know who started it, but soon he came to be known as "Paddy on the Turnpike," and just what this meant would be

hard to say. While we all know that Paddys are common enough in cities, still there wasn't a turnpike for this one to be on within five miles of Jefferson Square.

Although the children were afraid of the old man, they could not help teasing him whenever they got a chance. It seemed reckless and brave to shout out something and then take to their heels. They dared not come too near, for the same nurse-girl, seeing the sensation that her first remark had created, added another more astonishing, to the effect that Paddy had traded his soul to the devil, and was hunting the rubbish on the common over, for sufficient money to buy it back. Which was, of course, sheer nonsense, and if the children had been as good as all children should be, they never for a moment would have believed such a stupid untruth.

By degrees they grew bolder. They would creep behind when he was bending over his ash pile, nearer and nearer. Then they would shout something about the devil and his bartered soul, thinking they were brave indeed. Once they approached so near that they almost touched him, but he turned around suddenly

"HE TURNED AROUND SUDDENLY."

and reached out his rake as if he were going to rake them all in. At this a panic seized them, and they ran like young deer.

Finally Henry Clay Morton made a rhyme about him, and the others took it up. They never saw the old fellow without shouting to a sing-song tune that they had made themselves:

"Paddy on the Turnpike
Couldn't count eleven,
Put him on a leather bed,
Thought he was in Heaven."

CHAPTER III.

PADDY AND PEGGY

Not seeming to hear the children, the old man used to work in silence, gathering the bottles and rags and things and putting them in his bag. Once a week he sold all he had found and brought the money home to his wife.

Now Paddy and his wife lived in a little cottage on the far side of the common. And Paddy's wife was always sick. The poor woman had had a terrible accident in which she had been so badly crushed and twisted that she was never free from pain a single moment.

Paddy would rise early in the morning, and, before he left to go to his work, he would put her in her chair by the window so that she could look out on the common, and here she sat knitting socks all day long.

She did not know many people, so she was much alone. None of the neighbours in Jefferson Square were aware that such a person as Mrs. Paddy existed, though they might have seen her, if they had taken the trouble, every time they looked out of a front window; for she lived in plain view of all the dwellings on the Square.

But though none of the "well-bred" people ever knew of Mrs. Paddy's existence, sometimes the mother of the little outcasts who were too common to be the associates of fine ladies would drop in "to straighten things up a bit."

"Well, Mrs. Myer," she would say, "the top of the mornin' to ye. It's to market I've just been and the butcher sent ye a posy," and she would put a gay flower or two in the blue glass vase that stood on the sick woman's window-sill.

Or maybe one of the little outcasts would bring a bowl of steaming soup. "Mother thought you might like something to warm you up inside," the child would say, and Mrs. Paddy, unknown and unknowing of the fine world, would kiss and thank her with a smile that she must have learned from the angels.

But no other soul ever visited Mrs. Paddy, and knitting at her window, she led a solitary life indeed.

And the whole heart of Mrs. Paddy was bound up in Paddy, strange as that may seem. But, you must know, Paddy was a very differ-

ent sort of a person from what the children imagined him. No matter what she was suffering, Mrs. Paddy had always a bright look for him, while, with her, Paddy would grow so tender and his knotty features would smooth out so, the children never would have recognised him.

And Paddy's thousand attentions could only have been prompted by a loving heart. He even grudged every penny that he had to spend on himself; and indeed he had often gone hungry that his Peggy might have some little comfort.

You see, before she was hurt — before that dreadful day when the heavy four-horse team knocked her down and all but crushed the life out of her — he used to spend most of his earnings in drink. In fact, to tell you the honest truth, he was almost always drunk. And sometimes — it makes the tears come into his eyes to think of it now — he used to beat her. When he was drunk, you know; never except when liquor had stolen his brains.

Well, after she was brought in mangled and bleeding, he was so sorry he had ever treated her unkindly that he nearly lost his mind.

He prayed to God to let her stay with him long enough for him to prove how much he really loved her.

Afterwards when she lived, although but a crippled, suffering being, he was so afraid that he might forget himself and abuse her again, that he never touched a drop of anything stronger than coffee. The poor woman used to say that it was worth all the pain, and more, too, to have her husband always himself.

Giving up strong drink was not an easy task for him, and he often wanted it; but he shunned the society of his drinking friends, and never once went where he would be tempted.

He pretended not to hear the children's teasing, but it was only pretence. You see, he loved children dearly. He once had two little ones of his own, but God took them. For their dear sakes he had tender feelings toward all children, and it hurt him that these on Jefferson Square should run away from him every time he came near.

He also disliked their name for him; for his real name was Jerry, not Paddy at all. He

could not help telling his Peggy about it, especially when they had been unusually thoughtless and teasing.

It was after one of such times that he said to her: "I think I'll have a little speech with 'em. I'll tell 'em that far from wanting to hurt 'em, I'll be their friend if they'll let me."

"Do, lovey," replied Mrs. Peggy, "for I'm hatin' to have 'em misjudge you."

So the very next day he pretended to be raking and sifting until they came nearer and nearer shouting their jibes and their jeers, when he quickly turned around and facing them began his speech:

"Don't fear me, chil—" was all the further he got when the rosy cheeks became as white as sheets and such scampering and rushing over one another you never saw in all your life.

After that it was three whole days before a single one of them was bold enough to come even in sight when he was bending over his work, and he missed them so that he resolved never to attempt any conversation with them again as long as he lived.

CHAPTER IV.

HARD TIMES

THINGS went on in this manner for some time. Then the hot summer was over and the green leaves died and fell to the ground with a rustle. All the children except the babies started to school. It became too cold to play out-of-doors in the afternoon, and soon the days got so short that there were no afternoons, and the children forgot it ever had been summer at all.

If a body had not already known it, he would never have guessed that the row of houses on one side of Jefferson Square contained twenty-eight children toasting their toes by blazing fires.

We should say twenty-one, for the entire family of outcasts had moved from the square to a more congenial neighbourhood, and Mrs. Paddy lost the only friends she had. Instead

"ALL THE CHILDREN EXCEPT THE BABIES STARTED TO SCHOOL."

of the bright faces smiling and nodding to her every time they went in or out the front door, an ugly white card, with " For Rent " in big black letters, stared at her all day, reminding her sadly of the friends who were gone.

Paddy noticed her looking a little forlorn one morning, so he said:

" The cold weather doesn't agree with you, Peggy; there's too much air coming through the window cracks. I'll just move your chair away from it, and as close to the fire as may be."

He had to leave her alone a great deal those days, for bread was high and work scarce. To get either, a man had to start early so as to be handy for any odd jobs that came his way.

Peggy was sometimes so lonely that she missed even the naughty children, for in summer when they played on the common she could hear their young voices and it was company for her. Now all she could see was a bare brown waste with never a child in sight.

When Paddy was there bending over his ash heaps she didn't care, for every little while he would look up from his work, and wave his hand, and that was all she wanted.

Things got very desperate with the Paddys. Money became so scarce that they couldn't buy coal, but had to use half-burned cinders from the common instead. Peggy declared that they made a "real hot fire," and she would joke about their large coal cellar — meaning the common — "that never got empty — only fuller and fuller."

Paddy would come in shivering and shaking in his threadbare coat.

"And are you frozen entirely?" she would ask.

And he would answer: "I was mortal cold, but the sight of your gentle face has warmed my blood. Faith, it's better than all the fires!"

Whenever the sun came out she would make him take her to the window where she could warm herself in its rays. When her husband was working at the ash piles she would wave to him.

"On those days," said Paddy, "I always have luck. The people throw out more rags, and the cinders are in big lumps and only half burned."

Whenever he made a good find he waved his hand to her, but one day he waved both hands

and his cap, and she knew he had been unusually fortunate.

He came straight in to show her. He had found a big silver dollar. It was tarnished and black from the flames, but it was a good one with a true ring.

"Whose can it be, I wonder!" exclaimed Peggy.

"If I knew I'd have to take it back," answered Paddy, "but, unfortunately, people don't often leave their visiting cards on their ash heaps."

This was not all. The very day after he found the dollar, Peggy, from her window, saw more frantic waving.

This time it was a silver spoon!

"I can find the owner of that, I'm sure," says Paddy. And he made the rounds of all the houses in the neighbourhood to see if they were missing any spoons, but nobody claimed it.

Peggy cleaned it and made it shine like new. At first she didn't like to use it — it was so beautiful — but her husband persuaded her that as long as they couldn't sell it, seeing that the owner might be found some day, she had

better get the good of it. So she yielded, and declared that the soup had an extra richness all on account of the silver.

"It's luck coming our way, dear," says Paddy. "Money in our pockets and a silver spoon in our mouths — you'll see."

And it was so; though at first it took such a round-about path — a little way luck has — that they quite mistook it for something else.

CHAPTER V.

PEGGY OVERHEARS A STARTLING CONVERSATION

ONE cold morning in January Paddy built up a good fire, and, putting Peggy in her wheel chair, he placed everything in reach that she could possibly need.

"I'll not be back before dark, dearie," he said, "for outside of my convent work I have a job at the wharf that will keep me all the day." With this he kissed her on each pale cheek and on her sweet, patient mouth, and left.

The little cottage in which the Paddys lived, you will remember, was on the far side of the common. Behind it ran an alley where all sorts of people lived, — negroes, beggars, tramps, all of them poor and some of them desperate.

Peggy's cottage was at one end of the row, and the convent wall was built up close to the

side of it, leaving a space just wide enough for one person to squeeze through. The walls of the cottage were so thin that whenever the children hid in the narrow passage during their play, the sick woman inside could hear every word they said — could almost hear them breathe.

On the morning in question Peggy was sitting by her fire knitting so fast that you could not tell needles from fingers nor fingers from needles, when she heard the sound of talking between the cottage and the convent wall. She could tell that the speakers were men.

"Now, why have they crept in that narrow crack to talk?" she mused.

A low voice said:

"Are you sure she'll not go back on us?"

Another answered:

"She's safe enough; I've fixed her."

"Listen to me," said the first voice; "you are to bring a bundle to the side door at five o'clock. The nurse will let you in, and show you the closet under the staircase. There you'll stay until the house is locked up and everything settled for the night. After the children are asleep and the grown people quieted by the

drugged coffee — say when the convent bell strikes ten — you will slip out and, unlocking the side door, let me in. I have a plan of the house, and know where everything of value is kept. We'll get a good, rich pull, and skip."

"You're certain no harm will come from spiking the drink?"

"Not if she obeys orders; it'll give 'em a bully night's rest; that's all."

"How'll I know when it's safe to come out?"

"She says if anything happens not down on the books she'll come past your hiding-place, and give two taps like this" (tapping). "In that case you'll wait till you hear further."

"You'll be there to help, if I get caught? You won't slump?"

"Me? Never! Ain't I always been a man of honour?"

"They say old Morton's mighty game when once roused."

"But he won't be if we can help it; in case he is, and shows fight, why then we'll have to —"

The rest of the sentence was lost, and the two men departed.

Poor Mrs. Peggy sat frozen to her chair in terror. What on earth could she do! Her husband was gone for the day. There was no chance for his return before six o'clock at least.

"Poor, useless body!" she exclaimed, "the neighbours' property in danger, their very lives threatened, a traitor in their midst, and me sitting here knowing it all, and not able to do anything!"

She was so distressed at her helplessness that tears rolled down her thin cheeks. But soon she dried them and said, emphatically:

"There's no avoiding it; I must get word to Mrs. Morton!"

She thought harder than she had ever done before in all her life; then, as if answering objections, she said aloud:

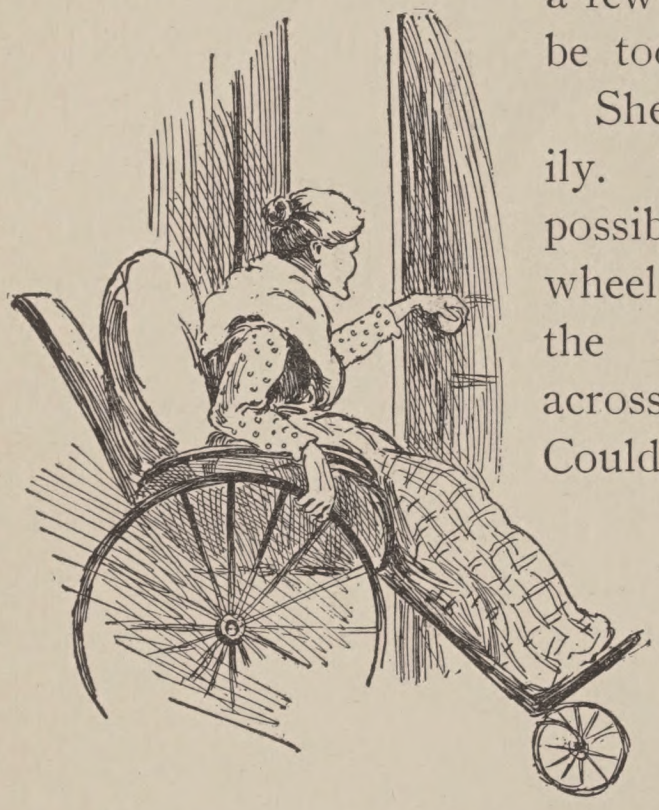
"If I can't get anybody to go for me, I will go myself."

She, poor soul, who had never moved unaided for five long years, except to turn the wheels of her chair for a few yards in her little narrow room!

She rolled herself away from the fire toward the door. With a little difficulty she opened

it, and peered out. Although she was warmly clad, the rush of cold air made her shiver, but she wrapped one of her shawls around her head and watched.

No one passed. Twelve o'clock struck. In a few hours it would be too late.



She sighed heavily. "Would it be possible for me to wheel myself over the common and across the street? Could I ever reach that great house alive?"

She did not think the Mortons' nurse knew her, though she remembered the woman distinctly.

Then a new difficulty occurred to her. "Even if I succeed in making the journey, can I get private speech with the right persons?"

She hesitated, then she added, bravely:

"Shame on me to think of giving up!" and throwing the door wide open, with a mighty effort she pushed her chair over the sill.

It rolled down with a bump and on for a few feet until it was stopped by a sharp stone.

It was only several inches from the door to the ground, nevertheless, the jar gave her so much pain that she nearly fainted. She lay still for some moments, more dead than alive.

"I must go! I have cut off all way of return now. Bumping down that step was one thing; getting back would be impossible."

But when she tried to go on, her weakness was so great that she could not make any progress. Her chair, wedged against the stone, was immovable.

"O God," she prayed, "I don't know what to do now — help me!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE POLICE ARE SUMMONED

"WELL, Mrs. Myer," exclaimed a bright, chirpy voice right behind her, "whoever would have thought of seeing you spry enough to be out-of-doors! Won't mother be glad?" and there stood the eldest little Outcast, smiling broadly, and holding in her chubby hand a tin bucket, that Peggy had seen many a time before.

"You've come just in time, dear heart," said the thankful Peggy. "Do you think you could wheel me across the street?"

"Across the street?" reiterated the girl. "Won't it tire you very much? Let me go for you."

"I fear you are too little for my business," replied Peggy, and as she spoke the words a new idea for accomplishing her purpose entered her mind. "Stay, love; I'll tell you

what you can do. Take me back to the house and you shall hear."

Miss Outcast did her best, and as the burden was not great and the chair rolled easily, after some bumping and shoving and pushing, Mrs. Myer found herself once more in her own room.

And, as she got her breath, she said: "Have you ever been to the river, dearie?"

"Oh, yes," answered the child, "father takes us down there every Sunday. We love to stand on the bridge and watch the water dashing against the piers. It's such fun; you can't think."

"Could you go there alone?"

"Course I could; what do you want to know for?"

"Jerry is working there to-day, pet, and I have something important to tell him. If you can find your way to the mail-boat landing where he is helping to load up, and tell him to come to me right away, you'll be doing a good action."

"I wonder if mother will scold?"

"Tell her it was my doing, and if she will come hear my reasons she'll be satisfied. You'll hurry, won't you, dear?"

Miss Outcast promised, and, after repeating the message several times, started briskly off.

The river and the mail-boat were reached without trouble, but to find Jerry was another matter. A long stream of porters carrying bags of something reached from the wharf to the boat. Their heads were concealed by the burden, and their bodies looked so much alike that the child was bewildered.

She stood there, frightened and forlorn, almost forgetting why she had come, when Jerry himself caught sight of her.

"Why, little one," he exclaimed, dropping his load, and coming toward her. "What on earth are you doing here alone?"

Miss Outcast felt happy once more; she beamed on him. "Oh, Jerry, you are the very man I came to see; go home just as quick as ever you can to your wife."

"Peggy, my Peggy! Is she worse?" and the poor fellow looked the anguish he felt.

"I don't b'lieve she's 'zackly worse," said the child, feeling very big indeed, "but she's acting queer, and she's got something 'portant on her mind and sent me for you."

Jerry waited to hear no more, but, seizing

the child's hand, started to run. Leaving her in her own street, he hurried on alone.

His wife was watching for him, trembling and anxious. She was so relieved when he appeared that she burst into tears.

He took her frail body in his arms: "Why, Peggy, old girl, what has happened? Has anybody been hurting you?"

At these tender words she controlled herself and told him all that had occurred.

He was thunderstruck. "The scoundrels!" he muttered. "They surely wouldn't dare — but rest easy, love. We'll get ahead of them, never fear."

He thought deeply. "The best thing, wife, is not to alarm the ladies, but to see Mr. Morton himself. I'll go to him as fast as I can." But even in his haste he stopped to replenish the fire, settle Peggy's pillows more comfortably, and warm some soup for her.

Then he sought Mr. Morton's office and asked to see him privately.

Mr. Morton sent word that he was busy and did not wish to be disturbed.

"Tell him it's a serious matter," said Jerry.

Upon receiving this message Mr. Morton invited him in, and, closing the door of the little private office where he was in the habit of holding confidential interviews with his clients, he prepared to listen with a bored air.

"I'm Jerry, sir," the visitor began, "Jerry

Myer. You may not know me, sir, but I know you, and your children — they call me Paddy — 'Paddy on the Turnpike.'"

"Oh, it's Paddy, is it?" said Morton, remembering.

"Yes, sir; no, sir — that is, it's Jerry, sir."

"Well, Jerry, be quick; what can I do for you this afternoon?"

And Jerry began:

"You see, sir, my wife, being poorly, has to sit all the time indoors. Our little cottage is just across the street from your fine house, sir; next to the convent wall with only a bit of a passway between; and Peggy, she's my wife, overheard two men, hiding there, talking and planning as how they would rob you to-night and drug you, and there's no telling what else besides."

"How is this?" cried Mr. Morton, "I'm to be robbed and drugged, am I?" and the great lawyer looked as if he thought the man was losing his wits.

But Jerry began and told a straight tale; told it so circumstantially and truthfully that Mr. Morton, forced to believe it, was genuinely alarmed.

He immediately summoned the police, and, after a rapid consultation, a plan was formed to capture the thieves.

Jerry was to unlock the big iron gates in the convent wall, where the coal-carts were in the habit of driving in. Two of the police were to hide there, and keep an eye on the house opposite until they saw a burglar number one admitted by the traitorous nurse-girl. Then they were to return at dark and guard the front of the house, so as to cut off all retreat from that direction. Two more of the force were to hide in the Mortons' stable, and prevent escape from the rear. Mr. Morton was to remain inside to avert suspicion and to give the alarm in case any violence was attempted. He was also to practise a little stratagem to prevent any of the family from drinking the drugged coffee.

"Don't seem to do anything unusual," counselled the chief. "Go to bed, and pretend to sleep. Let them rob you, and when they come out we will take care of them and their booty."

"And what am I to do, sir?" asked Jerry.

"You have done enough, man; you go

home and stay with your sick wife. She will be anxious if we expose you to danger."

You see, the officers wished to put both Mr. Morton and Jerry out of the affair, so that they could have all the glory of the capture.

CHAPTER VII.

WHERE WAS PEGGY?

When told to go home to his sick wife, Jerry obeyed. But what was his surprise, on reaching his tiny cottage, to find the shutters all closed, though it was early afternoon, and the front door held fast on the outside by two great tenpenny nails.

Where was Peggy? For the nailed door showed that she was not inside. To be sure, smoke was still coming out of the chimney, but this was accounted for when he remembered the big fire he had built before he left. Where, where was Peggy?

Perhaps one of the neighbours had been kind enough to come over and, finding her frightened and alone, had wheeled her away. But reflection told him that not one of the neighbours had ever been near her except the Outcasts, and the discovery of the plot was

an absolute secret. There would be no occasion for such sudden neighbourliness.

Then Jerry's heart stood still, for he heard a sound like a muffled cry. It seemed to come from behind the convent wall; so he crept softly into the narrow passageway just as the burglars had done. Here he could see without being seen.

At first everything was so still that he thought he must have imagined the cry, but soon heard the murmuring sound of voices so low that he could not tell whether of men or women.

Jerry was frightened to death. If he alone had been in danger he would have been brave, but with his delicate wife away, he knew not where, and more conspiracies going on behind the convent wall, he found it hard to decide just what he ought to do. Conflicting feelings put him in a sort of panic, but he had sense enough left to keep absolutely still.

Before going in search of his wife he must find out what new plan the rascals were hatching, so he stood, hardly daring to breathe.

The wind was sharp and keen. It swept across the wide common, whirling up the dust,

lifting the paper and rags and making them waltz. Ashes fell like rain in the narrow passage where Jerry stood. Then a whooping gust caught a lot of stuff, and forming a miniature cyclone, headed straight for Jerry. Before the poor fellow knew what he was doing, he had sneezed three times. The sound reverberated through the close passage as if he had blown through a gigantic horn.

Now he was lost! The men must do either one of two things; they might think they had been discovered, and run away, but the probability was that they would first look over the convent wall to find out who had sneezed. And then what?

Jerry seized a large boulder that lay at his feet. Though little and old, he had good strength, and the first head that rose over the wall meant a cracked skull.

"Jerry, Jerry?" He heard his name whispered by a strange voice. Where did the sound come from? Under his very feet.

"Jerry, Jer-ry," a little louder, "where are you?"

"Here behind the wall," whispered Jerry. "Who are you?"

Then there came a sound of steps, a window was raised, a shutter flung back.

At this Jerry could stand no more. He left his hiding-place, and strode boldly, the big stone in his hand, to the front of his cottage in time to see a sturdy leg emerging from his front window.

When the rest of the body followed, the mother of the little Outcasts stood before Jerry's astonished eyes.

"For the land's sake! Are you the burglar?" says Jerry.

"For the land's sake, are you?" asked Mrs. Outcast, and both began to laugh.

"And where's Peggy?" says Jerry.

"Inside with chattering teeth for fear of the men hid between the walls."

"How, when, what!" exclaimed the bewildered man.

"Stop talking, man, and come to your scared wife."

"I'm not scared now that I know who's there," piped a weak voice. "Come in right away out of the cold."

"And is it by the door or by the window ye'll have me enter, Missis Myer?" asked

"A STURDY LEG EMERGING FROM HIS FRONT WINDOW."

Jerry. And with that he took out the two tenpenny nails with his fingers just as easy as if they had been put in by women.

"Wait till I unlock," said Mrs. Outcast, as she climbed back, and presently the key turned, and Jerry was allowed to enter.

"And now, perhaps," said he, after he had kissed his wife, "ye'll be kind enough to tell me what it all means, for I'll be switched if I understand a word of it!"

Mrs. Outcast explained: "When Mimy came home with her story I felt in my bones that something was wrong, so I came as fast as I could to help. I found this little body scared to death, and you gone for no knowing how long. When she told her story I felt real uneasy myself, and wanted to take her home with me where she'd be safe. But she was faintlike, and besides she said she did not want you to come back and find her gone, Heaven knows where."

Jerry pretended to cough behind his hand.

"But two women alone," continued Mrs. Outcast, "are not apt to be exactly quiet in their minds when burglars are about, so I suggested that we shut up the house as if no

one were living here, and to make it seem more natural like, I put two nails in the door, and climbed in by the window."

"Wasn't it a smart trick?" asked Peggy, admiringly.

"The smartest I ever knew," answered Jerry, promptly. "But how was I to get in?"

"Oh, we were listening," said Peggy. "Don't you fear. We thought you would try the door and call, when we would know your voice and let you in."

"Instead of which, you hid, and made us think them burglars had come back sure enough," said Mrs. Outcast.

"And you screamed and whispered, and made me think them burglars were hurting Peggy."

And at this all three laughed until the tears rolled down their cheeks.

Peggy was the first to quiet down. "But tell us, love, what Mr. Morton said?"

And Jerry unfolded all the plan — not without first going out-doors, and looking carefully all around his little cottage to see if any eavesdroppers were in hiding. When he concluded by repeating Mr. Morton's order to go home

and stay with his sick wife, both women exclaimed in a breath:

"What a nice, sensible gentleman Mr. Morton is!"

CHAPTER VIII.

LUCK IN DISGUISE

BUT it was not Jerry's way to bide at home when such a dangerous adventure was afoot. The more he thought of it the more he was convinced he might be needed.

"Suppose there should be three of them burglars instead of two, and one of our men was to get hurt; it would be a battle with odds and maybe escape for the rogues. No — I won't get shoved aside; I'll disobey orders, and play a game of my own."

Then the little man stationed himself behind the window-blind, although it was a good two hours before the time set by the thieves. It was well he did so, for at half-past four a man with a bundle rang the door-bell at the side entrance of the Morton house.

"He's ahead of time," said Jerry. "I won-

der if them p'lices are behind the convent gate?"

The nurse-girl opened the door so quickly that she had evidently been on the watch. The man slipped in, and Jerry noted that he was big and brawny.

"It's going to be a mean job to tackle that fellow," he thought. Then he went to a pile of things in a corner, and selected a stout hickory stick.

He watched awhile longer, but nothing else happened. It grew dark. He kissed Peggy, who held him tight a moment, looked into his eyes lovingly, but did not protest or cry, as some wives would have done. He waved his hand as he left the door, and, keeping close to the convent wall, crossed the common. Into the Mortons' gate he slipped, and before anyone could say "Jack Robinson" he had crept under the steps of the side entrance.

He carried his good stick.

"They'll have pistols sure, and knives maybe, but give me a good whack with this at close range, and I'll beat 'em, pistols and all.

His position was cramped and uncomfortable, but he did not care. He crouched into as

small a space as possible. The time seemed long, but he never thought of giving up; he was there to stay.

The convent bell tolled the hours: eight, nine, ten. Then a step, soft and slow on the pavement, and he saw two feet. Another step as noiseless as a wild beast's; and he saw two more feet.

Jerry was right. There were three men instead of two — one inside, two out.

Presently came whispered words too low for him to catch, and he heard a bolt cautiously slipped.

One pair of feet disappeared; the other pair remained. This fellow on the outside would prevent the police from surprising the two within. Should Jerry tackle the watching burglar now or wait?

"I wonder how many more of them there are?" thought Jerry, as he took firm hold of his club, and eyed the waiting feet, scarcely daring to breathe.

In the meantime, the police stationed back and front had seen the two men arrive and one enter; but, not having reached the convent gate early enough, they did not know that a

third man was within. They kept guard and thought they had a sure thing of nabbing the burglars as they emerged with their spoils.

Then suddenly the stillness of the hour was broken by the loud report of a pistol not half a square away. All the policemen rushed in the direction of the sound, and saw a man fleeing in the distance. Two of them pursued him, blowing their whistles as they ran. The other two stopped to argue whether they had better help their comrades or return to their former hiding-place.

But while they talked an exciting scene had occurred. As soon as the shot was fired the thief on the outside made a break for the gate. Jerry started after him, but the rogue jumped the fence, and ran off, so, not to waste time in a fruitless chase, the crooked little old man turned back to find himself confronted by two more fugitives. For the shot on the outside was a prearranged warning of danger, and as soon as the burglars on the inside heard it, they rushed from the house with their booty.

They, too, were about to jump the fence when Jerry, wondering what the police were doing, and desperate at the idea of all three

of the rascals eluding them, sprang at them brandishing his club and yelling like a dozen Comanche Indians.

At the same time Mr. Morton appeared at the door with a shot-gun, and the burglars, thinking they had twenty foes instead of two, began a fight for life.

Mr. Morton stood framed in the doorway with a bright light behind him. The man nearest Jerry, the same strapping fellow who had entered in the afternoon, raised his arm, and there was a flash of metal as he took steady aim at Mr. Morton's breast. Another instant, and ten little children would have been fatherless; but a resounding whack from a hickory stick sent a shot into the air, and the hand that held the pistol dropped, nerveless. The would-be murderer tottered a few steps, then fell in a heap on the grass.

The remaining burglar, seeing that the game was up, dropped his plunder, and started to run. But, as luck would have it, he ran straight into the arms of the two policemen, who were returning to the spot they ought never to have quitted; and the policemen, not being able to get away, could not help making him their prisoner.

The same luck befriended the other two officers; for, coming back from a fruitless chase of the man who had fired the decoying shot, they fortunately were in time to capture the man who had jumped the fence, and were heroes among their fellows for nine days after.

The commotion had roused the whole neighbourhood. Windows were raised by frightened women, and half-dressed men ran into the street. Lights were quickly brought, and an excited crowd gathered round the prisoners, talking and asking a thousand questions.

The two men were handcuffed, and were about being carried off when a dark object on the grass attracted attention. A man, alive but unable to move. "Who is he?" "How did he get there?" Everybody surprised excepting Jerry.

"I beg your pardon, sirs," said the old fellow. "Please excuse me, sirs," — turning humbly from one to another, — "but I had to do it. He was going to shoot, and I couldn't stand that, sirs, so I just tapped him a bit with my friendly stick."

"And that isn't half," interrupted Mr. Morton. "If it had not been for the stout arm

of this brave old man I would be dead. See that pistol on the ground? It was aimed at

me when Jerry's club knocked the breath out of the scoundrel lying beside it."

While her husband was speaking, Mrs. Mor-

ton had appeared, and, on hearing his words, she went up to the crooked little man. Around his tanned and wrinkled neck went her white arms, and with the tears streaming she sobbed:

"You brave, brave soldier! His children and their mother will love and bless you as long as they live!"

Jerry was so ashamed that he knew not where to look when, fortunately, the patrol wagon drove up, and the public attention was diverted by the removal of the wounded man and the prisoners to jail. He seized the opportunity to escape, and hurried across the common to his little cottage.

There his Peggy awaited him. In those arms he was never ashamed; to her he was always a hero; and as, listening to his story, she gazed at him with eyes overflowing with tenderness, he felt that the earth could not contain a happier man than Jerry Myer.

CHAPTER IX.

PADDY MAKES THE EFFORT OF HIS LIFE

To make up for lost time Jerry hurried early to his work the next morning. He had finished his duties at the convent, and was on his way to the wharf when he met Mr. Morton, who stopped to shake hands and inquire how Peggy had stood the fright. Naturally they talked over the night's adventure.

Mr. Morton had several items of news, for the nurse had been arrested, and had made a full confession. If successful, the robbery was to have been the prelude for more in the same neighbourhood. It had been carefully planned by a gang of professional thieves. The pistol-shot had been fired by a confederate not only to inform the burglars that they had been discovered, but to decoy the police from the scene of action so that the thieves could make their escape.

L. of C.

"They did not count on your big stick, Jerry. Had it not been for you, every man of them would have gotten away."

"Sure they wouldn't, sir. Some of them would have been caught. But them p'lices are curious creeters. Now if I already had as many thieves on my hands as I could well look after, it never would have entered my head to go on a wild-goose chase after others. There's no accountin' for them p'lices' minds, anyway. And as for their bodies — well, did you ever see one that was not that fat that any thief at all couldn't outrun?"

Mr. Morton laughed. "I suppose they get them that way so they will stay where they are put."

"And so they can't run away from the thieves," added Jerry. "Now for all that I'm crooked, being thin, I'm nimble."

"Indeed you are; and furthermore, you have such good judgment that you saved the battle last night."

"I didn't mean that," cried Jerry, in distress and embarrassment. "Nobody could have done any less than I did."

"You mean any more, man. To my dying

day I shall never forget what I owe you nor the sound of the whack of that stick. But, see here, Jerry, you are not going to the wharf to-day?"

"Please, sir, I have to."

"No, you don't. You are getting old, and ought not to work so hard. My wife and I have been making inquiries, and we know all about you and your sick wife. How would you like to be janitor in the building where I have my office?"

"I'd like it, sir, if you think I'd suit. Are they needing a new man?"

"I heard only yesterday the present man had given notice, and I promised to be on the lookout for a new one. I think the place would suit you, and you it — it pays a fair salary." And here Mr. Morton named a sum that seemed so large to poor Jerry that his eyes nearly popped out of his head.

"Ah, I never could be worth all that, sir! But what a great thing it would be for Peggy!" And visions of unburnt coal in large lumps and real feather pillows and other luxuries for his suffering wife passed through his mind.

"I am sure you can fill the position ad-

mirably, and the salary is not half so large as you deserve. Come along and we will apply without loss of time."

Applying was a mere form, as Mr. Morton's recommendation was enough. The new janitor was engaged, and promised to enter upon his duties as soon as the convent could find a man to take his place.

Before this happened, Jefferson Square experienced a complete upsetting. All the children were summoned to meet in Mrs. Morton's long drawing-room, and came trooping to see what was wanted: the Earlys, the Rickersons, the Bakers, the Longs, the Adamses, the Morton children themselves, and, last of all, Mrs. Outcast with Mimy and the six other little Outcasts trailing behind. You may be sure none of them were late.

The curiosity of the children was roused to its highest pitch. They couldn't imagine what kind of a party it was going to be with chairs in rows like church. And when they were all seated Mrs. Morton looked so serious, that Addy Gravvy whispered to his neighbour, "I know — it's a funeral."

Then Mrs. Morton made them a long speech.

She told a story of a worthy old man working from morning till night to provide the barest necessities for his sick wife; she told of that wife's patience, of her cruel accident and suffering, of her devotion to her husband; she repeated the story of the way both of them had risked their lives to save the property of neighbours who barely knew of their existence. Then she drew a picture of twenty-one thoughtless little imps, jibing and jeering the hard-working man who was worth all the rest of the square put together — fathers and mothers included — and by the time she reached this point all twenty-one of the imps, and seven others who were not imps, were boohooing and bellowing in a way that was a caution.

"What are we going to do about it, children?" asked Mrs. Morton.

Each was for making amends in some way, and all blubbered out at once, but one — I think it was Henry Clay — cried louder than the rest:

"Le's go over, and tell 'em how sorry we are, and how we'll never make fun of him again as long as we live."

This sentiment met with enthusiastic ap-

proval, and they were all for rushing to the cottage in a body when Mrs. Morton stopped them.

"Wait, children; it would never do to startle the invalid with such a crowd. One of you must first go and ask Mrs. Myer when it will be convenient for her to see us. Who shall it be?"

And strange to say, every chick and child called out the same name right away. Can you guess whose it was?

Little Miss Outcast.

In a short time Mimy returned with the word that Mrs. Myer would love to see the children at any and all times, but they must be sure to come while Jerry was at home, as he would be so pleased.

"An' I didn't tell her a word of what we are going to say," reported Mimy.

The time was discussed, and the following day at noon was selected. Then some highly important arrangements were made; and after every last one had been pledged to secrecy the meeting adjourned.

During the next twenty-four hours Jefferson Square resembled an ant-hill after a big boy

has trod on it. Such rushing around and talking in excited groups; such goings out and comings in; such wagons colliding at front doors leaving bulky parcels; such errand boys breathless with carrying huge bundles! The like was never seen before.

Mrs. Myer from her window across the common did not know what to make of it. She thought at first that every one of her rich neighbours must be going to give a party; though after reflection she decided that this could not be, for if all of them were having parties, who would be left to come to them? She was very much at sea.

As the silver tones of the convent bell said it was twelve o'clock, a gay procession formed on the sidewalk in front of the Mortons'. First came the little children, and each carried something: shoes, stockings, socks, flannels — all of the very best quality. Next came the middle-sized ones with blankets, sheets, and real feather pillows. Then the biggest ones with china, glass, earthenware, and all such things. After them followed the nurses, carrying the babies, and each baby had a gold coin clasped tight in its little fat hand. Then

"AFTER THEM FOLLOWED THE NURSES, CARRYING THE BABIES."

the mothers, trying to keep the gang in order, brought dresses, shawls, and warm winter clothes. The children wore their best clothes and their freshest ribbons, and could not keep in place for a single minute.

The weather was built on purpose. It had been winter and it was going to be winter, but somehow one little spring day, balmy and fine, slipped in for the occasion. The poor people around got wind of the affair, and streamed over the common. Even the Penitents climbed the back wall of the convent and sat on top of the broken bottles to see the show. Only the nuns went on as if nothing were happening — telling their beads and singing their Ave Marias in ignorance of worldly events, as all good nuns should be.

Then Mrs. Morton gave the signal, and the children clasped hands, and marched across the common, singing at the tops of their lungs. To Peggy and Jerry, drawn to the window by the commotion, it was the sweetest sound they had ever heard since the voices of their dear little babes had been hushed.

Nearer and nearer they came, the little Outcasts, in the post of honour, leading. They did

not have anything to be sorry for, but everybody wanted them and they wanted to come. They crowded into the door of the cottage, and nearly buried the aged couple with gifts, — all of them talking at once. but Peggy and Jerry

Each child came up and, shaking the worthy couple by the hand, promised never to be thoughtless and wicked again.

After this ceremony, Jerry, overcoming his shyness, made the effort of his life. He thanked the children and their parents in a speech that Peggy afterward described as being " just too beautiful, winding up as it did with real poetry made up mostly from his own head."

And she told the truth. The old fellow had a roguish twinkle in his gray eye as, pointing to the piles of blankets and pillows, he said:

" Though Paddy on the Turnpike
Could never count eleven,
When children all brought feather beds
He an' Peggy tho't they was in Heaven."

THE END.

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